



Testimony for: SB0381 - Education - School Building Energy Usage - Monthly Report
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Person Submitting: Monica O'Connor - Co-Chair
Hearing Date: February 27, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB0381. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of 32 grassroots and professional organizations focused on climate justice, urges you to vote favorably on SB0381.

Maryland counties spend increasing larger sums of money on heating and cooling school buildings each year. Understanding a building's annual energy use is an important first step to identify cost saving energy efficiency opportunities.

SB0381 would require each county board of education to collect data on energy usage and report the data to the Interagency Commission on School Construction; which would additionally be tasked with adopting regulations that specify the data to be collected, along with the means and frequency of reporting. This first step will enable school systems to move forward with energy benchmarking, consume less energy and lower costs. At a time when school budgets are extremely tight, implementing energy monitoring can result in both energy and cost savings.

[EPA's ENERGY STAR program](#) has shown that more than 30% of energy use in schools goes to waste, with 10% easily recovered through low-cost operational improvements alone. Across the country, school districts are finding that through monitoring energy costs can drop 15-25% within the first year, without replacing equipment, disrupting classrooms, or needing capital budget approvals. The greatest [school energy waste](#) results from:

- HVAC systems running at full capacity during low or zero occupancy periods, (wasting 40-50% of total energy spending);
- Equipment degradation such as aging compressors, worn bearings, and failing belts that lose 15-30% efficiency long before they stop working entirely;
- Over-ventilating spaces to compensate for unmeasured indoor air quality instead of responding to actual CO2 and occupancy data; and
- Problems that go undetected for days or weeks because nobody checks temperature monitoring logs over weekends and breaks.

County school systems that do not have sufficient staffing and financial resources available to collect and track this data can look to the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) for support. MEA has several existing programs designed to help educational institutions as they engage in sustainable, clean energy projects. MEA's Decarbonizing Public Schools Program provides support to public schools for energy monitoring.

Students need to learn in safe and comfortable environments. School systems need to save money. SB0381 is an inexpensive and necessary step to reduce costly and wasteful energy consumption in schools. For these reasons we urge a favorable report on SB0381 in committee.

350MoCo

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Chesapeake Earth Holders

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Climate Law and Policy Project

Climate Communications Coalition

Climate Parents of Prince George's

Climate Reality Greater Maryland

ClimateXChange

Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County

Echotopia

Elders Climate Action Maryland

Fix Maryland Rail

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

Greenbelt Climate Action Network

HoCoClimateAction

Howard County Indivisible

Maryland Legislative Coalition

Maryland Energy Advocates

Maryland Third Act

Mizrahi Family Charitable Fund

Mobilize Frederick

Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Mountain Maryland Movement

Nuclear Information & Resource Service

Progressive Maryland

Safe & Healthy Playing Fields

Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

The Climate Mobilization MoCo Chapter

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland